

From: Dick Wall
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 11/17/01 8:44am
Subject: Re: Microsoft Settlement

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you to voice my concern over the recent MS/DOJ settlement. I do not believe it to be a strong enough settlement to keep Microsoft honest (they have a proven track record of being distinctly dishonest in the past).

I am sure you are going to get a lot of letters explaining how the settlement could be strengthened or enforced better. What I am more concerned with is the apparent softening in the attitude the DOJ has displayed towards Microsoft.

In short, I want to cut through to the heart of the matter, what is best for the industry as a whole.

The Microsoft spin machine has been putting in overtime to convince the world that DOJ legislation would be bad for innovation. What a spin. If you look at history you will see that the last thing Microsoft does is innovate.

If you look at the historical major breakthrough's in the world of technology you have a hard time finding anything that Microsoft or the PC world is actually responsible for or involved in. Considering that the Microsoft windows on PC platform is by far the most common platform in the industry, I challenge anyone to list 5 important breakthroughs made on this ubiquitous platform. Internet (Unix and VMS through Arpanet), World Wide Web (created on NeXT), Hypertext (that would be Apple), Desktop GUI Paradigm (Xerox Parc, using Unix).

The only thing Microsoft appears to have innovated is the development tools to make a million applications that look exactly the same. In short, Microsoft displays little to know innovation, and in fact their dominance in the information world seems to stifle innovation in others.

Take for example Be. I followed the BeOS closely, watched as the first attempt in a very long time was made to introduce a new commercial general purpose operating system. It was one of the most staggering examples of innovation I have ever seen. The very architecture of the OS was so ambitious as to be electrifying. The speed and responsiveness exhibited to the average user was not by accident, it was due to the extensively multi-threaded nature of the OS. It was at least five years ahead of Microsoft in terms of architecture, but it never stood a chance. I know there are at least as many business reasons why they may have failed as there are causes to point the finger at Microsoft, but the truth is that Microsoft have, for the period of their dominance, had a *negative* net effect on the "innovation" they claim to embody.

I have lost count of the excellent ideas, technologies, or companies who have been bought out, run out of business, or simply never stood a chance because of the grip Microsoft holds on the computer industry. It is a measure of the strength of the grip they exhibit when an operating system like Linux which technically is at least a match for windows in all key areas, and is given away for free, still eeks out at best a moderate survival on the server. It is also interesting that much of the innovation taking place in the world of IT still seems to come from Linux and other Unix platforms, and not from PCs running windows.

I would urge the DOJ to please consider carefully these issues past, and what would truly be best in the future for the industry. If Microsoft is able (for example) to dominate business and commerce transactions on the internet through it's .NET initiative, what future is there then for other platforms and competition.

Incidentally, and interestingly, .NET is another example of innovation-not-quite. XML was drawn from HTML and SGML (Unix/NeXT background). The architecture mentioned is primarily a unix and java developed architecture. Heck, even Client/Server was so alien to Microsoft that they did not really start to get it until a couple of years ago - approximately 25 years after one of the best examples of client/server - X window system - was developed by MIT on Unix!).

Thanks for listening.

Dick Wall

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